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includes upper and lower blast pipes 11a, 11b located above and below the strip 4 (please see Fig. 2 that shows a mirror image of the arrangement of the washer units shown in Fig. 1). - -.

In the Claims:

Cancel claims 1-4.

Add claims 5-8 as follows:

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5. A method of operating a counterflow cascade washer for wet-chemical treatment of a surface of a metal strip and to be located downstream of one of treatment means and aftertreatment means of a metal strip treating installation, with the counterflow cascade washer including a plurality of washer units each having means for connecting a respective washer unit with a fresh water supply and a rinsing water circuit, the method comprising the steps of branching a portion of a water flow, which circulates through a rinsing water circuit associated with each of the washer units, off in form of a bypass stream; and feeding the bypass stream to a washer unit located immediately upstream of a respective washer unit for additionally rinsing the metal strip in the immediately upstream washer unit with a rinsing water containing a smaller concentration of foreign additives than a rinsing water with which the metal strip is first treated in the immediately upstream washer unit.

6. A method as set forth in claim 5, further comprising the step of dividing the branched bypass stream at an end of the immediately upstream washer unit and feeding the divided water stream to locations above and below the metal strip.

7. An apparatus for operating a counterflow cascade washer for wet-chemical treatment of a surface of a metal strip and to be located downstream of one of treatment means and aftertreatment means of a metal strip treating installation, with the counterflow cascade washer including a plurality of washer units each having means for connecting a respective washer unit with a fresh water supply and a rinsing water circuit and rinsing means connected with the connecting means for washing the metal strip in the washer unit, the apparatus comprising a separate bypass conduit integrated into a rinsing water circuit associated with each of the washer units; and outlet means provided at an end of the bypass conduit for feeding a bypass stream to an end of a washer unit located immediately upstream of a respective washer unit for additionally rinsing the metal strip in the immediately upstream washer unit with a rinsing water containing a smaller concentration of foreign additives than a rinsing water with which the metal strip is first treated with the rinsing means of the immediately upstream washer unit.